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# **The Conversion of Pa**

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**By WM. PERRY**

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**FRANKLIN, OHIO** **DENVER, COLO.**

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

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Josiah Armstrong—An old-fashioned but influential farmer.

Mrs. Armstrong—Josiah Armstrong's wife.

Nellie Armstrong—Their daughter

Willie Armstrong—Their 12-year-old son.

James Thornton—County Agricultural Agent.

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# The Conversion of Pa

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## ACT I.

*(Breakfast just finished. Mr. Armstrong reading a newspaper. Mrs. Armstrong and daughter clearing the table.)*

*Mr. Armstrong*--Well, well, well! Of all the fool things.

*Mrs. Armstrong*--What's wrong, Josiah?

*Mr. A.*--I see here where a so-called farm demonstration agent has been hired to show us how to farm. The very idea of such a thing! What is the world coming to?

*Mrs. A.*--What do you mean by that?

*Mr. A.*--I don't know, except it says that the government has employed these so-called experts to travel around to show us farmers how to grow more corn and other crops on the land by improved methods.

*(Mr. A. drops paper and moves to another chair.)*

*Mrs. A.*--It seems to me there is room for improvement on this farm.

*Mr. A.*--Look here, Jane, I have been making a living on this farm ever since we were married. Now, some upstart of a white-collared, book-learned college fellow comes along telling me how to farm.

*Mrs. A.*--It may be that he wants to show you some method to produce larger yields with less effort.

*Mrs. A.*—Nellie and I have great faith in these up-to-date, progressive movements, especially the Boys' Club Work. If we could only get him to let Willie try his hand at it.

*Mr. T.*—How old is Willie?

*Mrs. A.*—Twelve years of age.

*Mr. T.*—Does he seem interested in the club idea?

*Mrs. A.*—Yes. After reading the announcement in the paper this morning, he seems just crazy to join the club.

*Mr. T.*—Suppose you call him in.

*Nellie*—(*goes to door and calls*) Willie, Willie, come here a minute.

(*Enter Willie.*)

*Nellie*—Willie, this is Mr. Thornton, the Boys' Club man. I told him you wish to join, but I think it best that you wait until next year on account of father's objections. It may be he will become converted when he hears of the success of other boys in the county.

*Willie*—I sure would like to be in the club this year, and I think Pa ought to let me do it.

*Mr. T.*—Look here, Willie. I am glad you have the ambition to be a club member, but it is one's first duty to obey his parents. I think I can get your father over.

*Mrs. A.*—What is your plan, Mr. Thornton?

*Mr. T.*—All that I ask is that none of you reveal the fact that I am county agent.

*Mrs. A.*—If you will excuse me I will be getting on the dinner.

*Mr. A.*—(*outside*) Whoa, Dan. Willie, come take this horse.

(*Exit Willie.*)

*Nellie*—Why, that is father. He must have changed his mind about going to town, or else he made the trip mighty quick.

(*Enter Mr. A.*)

*Nellie*—You are back quite soon.

*Mr. A.*—Yes, I met Mr. Jones, whom I wanted to see, and did not have to go all the way.

(Enter *Mrs. A.*)

*Nellie*—Father, let me introduce you to Mr. Thornton.

*Mr. A.*—I am glad to meet you. Let's see, what is your line of business?

*Mr. T.*—I am traveling through here, having in view the making of my home in this locality.

*Mr. A.*—Thornton, you say, James Thornton? It seems to me that is the name of a county agricultural agent, who has been (*raising voice*) thrust on us. Where is today's paper?

(*Mr. A. looking through a bunch of papers, Mrs. A. quietly pushes the day's paper with her foot under couch.*)

*Mr. A.*—(continuing) It seems strange a paper can't last a day in this house.

*Mr. T.*—I know whom you refer to. Strange to say, a fellow by my name has been appointed as agent. I have been wanting to locate hereabouts, and as soon as I learned an agent was appointed I fully made up my mind to come and get the benefit of his advice.

*Mr. A.*—So you are one of these new-fangled farmers; goodness help you, is all I can say. If I were you, I would locate in some other community, where people are fools enough to believe such rot.

*Mr. T.*—I think I will reserve my decision and look a little further in the county.

*Mr. A.*—(aside) You said a wise thing my boy.

(Enter *Willie.*)

*Mr. T.*—(continuing) I think I will be going now. I hope to see you later on, when I hope your mind will change regarding improved methods of farming.

*Mr. A.*—It will take more than you, all the experiment stations and demonstration agents combined to convert an experienced farmer like myself.

*Mr. T.—(moving toward door.)* By the way, Mr. Armstrong, I have in my case a package of corn a friend of mine gave me to plant. He represents it as a very fine variety. I may not get settled, so I thought I would let you introduce it here, as I have learned that you are quite influential in this section.

*Mr. A.—*Nothing doing, I have in my crib corn that has passed down from my grandfather. It can't be beat.

*Mr. T.—*How much do you average to the acre?

*Mr. A.—*Oh, about 20 bushels.

*Mr. T.—*I don't see why you should object to trying out this corn. I have here enough for an acre.

*Mr. A.—*I told you I would not fool with it, but since that boy, Willie, has been making so much fuss about getting in that measley thing they call the corn club, I think I will just give him that corn to plant as a sort of consolation.

*Mr. T.—*And let him be a member of the club?

*Mr. A.—NO! (Aside.)* I won't take chances on having the neighbors make sport of me, growing that improved corn. *(To Willie.)* Willie, do you want to plant that corn as a holiday patch?

*Willie—*Yes, Pa, I will take it.

*Mr. T.—*I'll read the directions on the package for growing it. *(Reads.)* Prepare the land well. Distribute broadcast 200 to 400 pounds of high-grade fertilizer and mark off the land in rows  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet apart and place kernels 2 feet apart in rows. Cultivate the corn level and shallow and as often as possible.

*Mr. A.—*Ha, ha, ha! Of all the idiotic ways of growing corn. Why, that patch will be the laughing stock of the county. But freaks must have their day. Go ahead, Willie, and do as the directions say.

*Mrs. A.—(looking out of the window.)* Josiah, there's all the cows out.

*Mr. A.—*Good-bye, sir. Come, Willie, help get up those cows.

*(Exeunt Mr. A. and Willie.)*

*(Nellie goes with Mr. T. to the door. They stand quietly conversing for a few minutes and Mr. T. passes out.)*

CURTAIN.

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ACT II.

*(Mr. Armstrong's sitting room. All the members of the family standing excitedly looking over the headlines of a newspaper.)*

*Mr. A.*—Who would have thought it? I can hardly believe my eyes. Some mistake may have been made, though I hope this is true.

*Mrs. A.*—So, you are convinced that there is something in what you call "new-fangled" farming?

*Mr. A.*—Believe me, this is the day of wonders.

*(Door bell rings. Nellie trips to door, admitting Mr. Thornton.)*

*Mr. T.*—Just listen to the headlines of this paper. *(Reads.)* "Corn Prize at State Fair Awarded to Willie Armstrong, of Blake County." Isn't that too good to be true?

*Mr. T.*—Well, Willie, you have my congratulations. Have you converted your dad, yet?

*Willie*—Yes, I think he is convinced that our way is right.

*Mr. T.*—Mr. Armstrong, I want you to tell me the history of that corn crop.

*Mr. A.*—I had mighty little faith in that proposition, as you know. It looked for a time as though my corn would beat Willie's all hollow, but he kept pegging away until the dry weather came, and my corn began wilting

and his kept green. From then on I never saw such fine corn. Neighbors came from miles around to see it. Finally a representative of the county experiment station heard of it and made a trip here to take a look. He told Willie he ought to exhibit some of his corn, and offered to select the sample. Well, sir, he's got the prize and I'm proud of him.

*Mr. T.—How much corn did he make?*

*Mr. A.—Sixty-five bushels.*

*(Phone rings.)*

*Mr. A.—(Goes to phone. Speaks.)* Yes, this is Josiah Armstrong. \* \* \* Yes, Willie is my boy. \* \* \* He made sixty-five bushels of as fine corn as ever grew. \* \* \* How much do you say you'll give him for it? \* \* \* Three dollars a bushel? *(To Willie.)* Come here, Willie, a man is phoning to know if you will take \$3.00 a bushel for your corn for seed. Will you take it?

*Willie—You bet I will, but I will give you all you need, first.*

*Mrs. A.—Josiah, I must let you in on a little joke. This Mr. Thornton is our county agricultural agent. It is he who came to see you in the spring and got Willie on to raising that corn.*

*Mr. A.—(getting up and extending his hand to Thornton.)* Give me your hand, old top. You have convinced me that I do not know all about farming. You have played your hand well. I shall look to you often for advice in the future.

*(Exeunt Mrs. A., Nellie and Willie. They may be seen by the audience listening at a cracked door, unnoticed by Mr. A. or Mr. T.)*

*Mr. T.—Ever since my first visit here I have been possessed of a strong admiration for your daughter. The ties have grown stronger day by day. I have just secured an option on the Ben Taylor place, which I wish to develop into a model farm while engaged in my county agent work. To grace this home, sir, I ask the hand of Nellie.*

*Mr. A.—Mr. Thornton, your request is granted. With a man of your diplomacy, I am willing to trust my daughter.*

*(The family rushes in.)*

*Mr. T.—Nellie, your father said "yes."*

*Mrs. A.—I shall add my hearty approval.*

*Mr. T.—Say, Mr. Armstrong, are you going to vote against the county agent business again?*

*Mr. A.—I shall not only emphatically endorse the work, but shall use my influence in helping develop community clubs, better roads, schools and churches.*

*Willie—And Pa, may I join the corn club?*

*Mr. A.—Go to it, son, and get every boy you can in the neighborhood to join, too.*

*Willie—Goody! Goody!*

*Mrs. A.—Let us all go in the parlor and sing "Home, Sweet Home."*

CURTAIN



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